

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON AND SKAGIT COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEARING ON SCOPE OF EIS  
JANUARY 9, 2014

Commissioner Hearing Room  
1800 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, Washington 98273

CORPOLONGO & ASSOCIATES  
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**ORIGINAL**

Reported by: Deanna Ellis, CCR

1 4:00 p.m.

2

3 COMMISSIONER DILLON: Hi, I am Commissioner  
4 Sharon Dillon. I am one of the three County  
5 Commissioners. I'd like to welcome you here today.

6 Hopefully you're here to listen to what is being  
7 presented. We want your opinions. Please voice what  
8 you have to say and what you want to move forward with.  
9 That's why the City of Mount Vernon, there mayor is in  
10 the back over there. That's why Skagit County has their  
11 people. We want to listen to the people. We want to  
12 make sure that your voices are heard.

13 I welcome you here. Thank you all very, very much  
14 for coming and have a great night.

15 Thanks.

16 MS. HANSON: Thank you all for being here  
17 today. The purpose of today's meeting is to inform the  
18 public about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
19 that we have been working on since August. That's  
20 looking at the environmental elements and impacts  
21 associated with the two sites that have been selected  
22 for the jail. Those sites are the Alf Christiansen site  
23 and the Truck City site on old 99.

24 So what will happen today is Maggie Buckley with  
25 David Evans and Associates -- they are the consulting

1 firm that's been hired by the City and the County to  
2 perform the Draft Environmental Impact Statement --  
3 she'll be providing an overview of the Draft  
4 Environmental Impact Statement. Then we're inviting all  
5 of you to come up and make comments on the DEIS. We'd  
6 like to limit those comments to three minutes, and those  
7 are being recorded by our court reporter here. So those  
8 minutes will be available. Probably within two week's  
9 time you can contact my office, the City of Mount  
10 Vernon, or the County. Gary Christensen, I believe, can  
11 be the contact person with the County.

12 Following tonight's meeting, the comment period  
13 will be open on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
14 until the 16th of this month. We will then close that  
15 and move on into the entitlement process through the  
16 City, which includes the rezone and the comprehensive  
17 plan amendment for both of those sites. We'll talk more  
18 about that during the presentation that Ms. Buckley will  
19 give.

20 So any questions, comments, please make those. I  
21 will be working on the list that you've all signed up  
22 for. I know that not all of you want to speak, but if  
23 you would like to, please come up and, again, limit your  
24 comments to three minutes.

25 Thank you.

1 MS. BUCKLEY: Good afternoon, everyone. My  
2 name is Maggie Buckley. I'm with David Evans and  
3 Associates. I supported the City and County on  
4 preparation of the Draft EIS for the Skagit County Jail  
5 Project.

6 As Jana mentioned, I just want to give you all a  
7 brief overview of the project and give a very quick  
8 summary of the results of the Draft EIS. I do want to  
9 mention that there was some copies of the summary in the  
10 Draft EIS on the back table if you'd like to take that  
11 for some very exciting, pleasure reading.

12 I do want to keep it brief today because, as Jana  
13 mentioned, the reason we're here is to hear from you.  
14 Providing ongoing and meaningful public input is one of  
15 the primary reasons that we do the SEPA EIS process. So  
16 we've done the best that we can to disclose the  
17 project's impacts in the Draft EIS in a clear and  
18 concise way, and now we want to hear from you. From  
19 that point, when we do hear from you, hopefully the City  
20 and the County will be able to make the best decision  
21 that they can at the end of the day.

22 The purpose of this project is really twofold. In  
23 the near term, the purpose is to provide jail  
24 infrastructure to accommodate the County over the next  
25 15 to 20 years, but we want to look a little further

1 into the planning horizon. In the longer term, the  
2 primary purpose of the project is to accommodate the  
3 County's needs on a 40 to 50 year planning horizon.

4 Most of you probably already know what the need is  
5 for the project. It focuses really on overcrowding at  
6 the existing jail. The existing jail was built in 1984  
7 to accommodate only 83 inmates. It was expanded in the  
8 80s and early 90s to accommodate 180 inmates, but today  
9 the average daily population is somewhere around 263.  
10 Projections show that could get up to over 400 by the  
11 year 2040.

12 So the proposed project is to construct a jail in  
13 two phases. The first and initial phase would be a  
14 100,000 square foot facility with 400 inmate beds and  
15 some facilities to support that. The second phase or  
16 what we call "full build out" is to accommodate that  
17 longer 40- to 50-year planning horizon that I mentioned.  
18 That would be 155,000 square foot facility with an  
19 additional 400 beds to provide total of 800 inmate beds.

20 The County considered a total of 14 sites for a new  
21 jail. Through their alternatives evaluation process,  
22 they really whittled it down to two sites which are  
23 evaluated in the Draft EIS, and that process is  
24 summarized in Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS, if you want  
25 more detail.

1           The first is the Alf Christiansen Seed site. That  
2 is located just south of Kincaid Street and north of  
3 union and sits in between the railroad and I-5. The  
4 site itself is represented by that red boundary there,  
5 and it's about 7.8 acres in size and is comprised of  
6 pieces of 21 different parcels.

7           The second site is the Truck City, Suzanne Lane  
8 Site, and that's located in south Mount Vernon -- again,  
9 shown in red there. It's about 10.4 acres in size and  
10 is comprised of five different parcels.

11           The Draft EIS also evaluates a third alternative,  
12 and that's what we call the "no action alternative."  
13 We're required to evaluate that under SEPA. What that  
14 means for this project is that a jail would not be  
15 constructed, so the County would continue to use the  
16 existing jail as they do today.

17           I do want to mention, the Jail Coordinating Counsel  
18 unanimously agreed that a new jail was needed for the  
19 County, and County residents really supported that  
20 sentiment when they approved the increase in the sales  
21 tax to construct a new jail. So this alternative, while  
22 we have to evaluate it, isn't really a viable, long-term  
23 solution to address the overcrowding issue. So if this  
24 alternative were selected, some other action would  
25 likely need to be taken by the County. We don't know

1 what the action would look like to address the  
2 overcrowding issue.

3         The Draft EIS looks at eight different elements of  
4 the environment. The first seven that are listed there  
5 are pretty standard for an EIS document. I do want to  
6 point out, though, that the eighth one, economics is  
7 somewhat atypical. We added that after the result of  
8 the public scoping period. We heard from you all that  
9 you were concerned with potential impacts on property  
10 values, potential impacts on tax revenues and more  
11 general economic impacts to businesses in the city  
12 limits, especially in the downtown area. As a result of  
13 that, the City and the County decided to add that  
14 element to the EIS.

15         So alternative impacts, this is the exciting stuff.  
16 So of the eight elements that we analyzed, five of those  
17 really had similar impacts between the two site  
18 alternatives, so I want to run through those pretty  
19 quickly.

20         The first is geology and soils. The conditions on  
21 both sites do create some potential for settlement  
22 hazardous, and that issue would be addressed primarily  
23 through the design of the jail, the foundation type and  
24 through the construction methodology.

25         Floodplains, both sites are located within the

1 hundred-year floodplain. To comply with City Code, the  
2 jail would need to be constructed above the base flood  
3 elevation.

4 Hazardous materials, we know that current and past  
5 uses on both of these sites really create a potential to  
6 encounter contaminated soils, underground storage tanks,  
7 or asbestos. Additional investigations are recommended  
8 to further evaluate that. If some contamination is  
9 found in those investigations, it would need to be  
10 removed prior to moving forward with construction.

11 For cultural resources, there is still a  
12 possibility -- although we didn't find anything when we  
13 surveyed the two sites, it was somewhat of a limited  
14 survey -- we think that there is still some potential to  
15 encounter archaeological resources. So, again, we're  
16 going to do some additional investigations on either  
17 site, and we'll address that issue further.

18 Transportation, our analysis shows that a new jail  
19 would generate up to 34 new vehicle trips in the p.m.  
20 peak hour, which is a fairly minor amount of traffic in  
21 the overall transportation system. Some off-site  
22 improvements would be required at either site to comply  
23 with City Code. Specifically at the time Alf  
24 Christiansen Seed Site, those improvements would depend  
25 on what the access configuration is there which hasn't

1 been determined yet.

2 I'll move onto the remaining three elements of the  
3 environment that did have some greater differences  
4 between the two sites. Aesthetically, a new jail on  
5 either site would have fairly minor changes on visual  
6 quality, but at the Alf Christiansen Seed Site we did  
7 determine that a new jail would be somewhat inconsistent  
8 with the visual character that's envisioned for the  
9 downtown area and Kincaid Street, specifically, since  
10 it's a planned gateway into the downtown area.

11 To address that issue, we've recommended some  
12 modifications to the project design, such as  
13 incorporating an outdoor space or some public art on the  
14 site and also complying with the design guidelines that  
15 are in the Waterfront and Downtown Master Plan.

16 Economics, so our analysis basically focused on  
17 what type of a development could occur on either site if  
18 we didn't build a jail there. Based on the current  
19 market conditions at the Alf Christiansen Seed Site,  
20 that alternative development was defined as a mixed use  
21 development with some commercial and retail uses. At  
22 the Truck City Site, that looks more like a business  
23 park. The real difference between the two, from an  
24 impact perspective, is the quantity of potentially lost  
25 revenue. So if we build a jail at either site, that

1 alternative development scenario is lost. From a fiscal  
2 standpoint, that looks like \$86 million a year in gross  
3 business receipts for the mixed use development on the  
4 Alf Christiansen Seed Site and 220 jobs versus the Truck  
5 City Site -- it's somewhat lower -- \$17 million in gross  
6 business receipts per year and 112 jobs.

7 And finally for land use, a new jail at the Truck  
8 City site is generally consistent with the City's land  
9 use plans. At the Alf Christiansen Seed Site, there are  
10 some specific goals that are identified in the City's  
11 Downtown Waterfront Master Plan focused on providing  
12 more of a mixed used, commercial, retail-type  
13 developments in the downtown area. And so to  
14 accommodate that and to address those goals we've  
15 recommended a few different things to modify the project  
16 design, such as incorporating a pedestrian pathway on  
17 the site which would connect the northern and southern  
18 uses. As I mentioned before, anethetics, incorporate  
19 some, potentially, public art or an outdoor space to try  
20 and enhance Kincaid Street as the gateway to downtown.

21 So we are here because we want to know what you  
22 think. There are three different ways that you can  
23 comment. The first is by providing a statement tonight  
24 in front of the court reporter. If you feel more  
25 comfortable writing your thoughts down, you can just

1 fill out a comment form and leave it in the box on the  
2 back table. If you'd like to think about things a  
3 little more, you can provide comments to the City by  
4 next Thursday at 5 p.m., which is the close of the  
5 comment period.

6 And I do want to just reassure you that tonight is  
7 not the last opportunity to provide public input on this  
8 project. In terms of SEPA, we'll be wrapping the  
9 process up here in the next month or two. We will  
10 address all the comments that are received during the  
11 comment period, and we'll issue a Final EIS in the next  
12 one to two months. So that will wrap things up for  
13 SEPA. Then we'll move into the land use permitting  
14 process this spring, and that's needed to change the  
15 comprehensive plan and zoning designation on either site  
16 to a public use which would accommodate a new jail.

17 And then from there we'll move into the essential  
18 public facilities permitting process. We expect that  
19 that will happen this coming summer. Both of those  
20 final two processes have open record public hearings, so  
21 those are two additional opportunities that you can  
22 voice your opinion on the project. There are some  
23 handouts on the back table about those two processes, if  
24 are you are interested.

25 So that does it for me. From here, we'll open it

1 up for public statements. Please remember when you come  
2 up you have three minutes to provide a statement.  
3 Please state your full name and address. We look  
4 forward to hearing from you.

5 MS. HANSON: So I have a Ron Coakley.

6 MR. COAKLEY: I'm good.

7 MS. HANSON: Bill Valder. Lori Coppenrath.  
8 I'm sorry, I can't read the fourth name. Dahl, Sonya  
9 Dahl.

10 MS. DAHL: I didn't sign up to speak tonight.

11 MS. HANSON: Oh, okay. I'm just reading off  
12 the sign-up sheet.

13 Balisa Koetje.

14 MS. KOETJE: Hello. So where do we want the  
15 jail?

16 My name is Balisa Koetje. I'm a commercial real  
17 estate broker with Windermere Commercial Real Estate in  
18 Mount Vernon. I have worked in the profession of  
19 commercial finance and commercial real estate for the  
20 past 30 years.

21 In regards to the two jail sites under review,  
22 professionally, my husband, Jim Koetje and I, represent  
23 the Truck City Site in south Mount Vernon. However,  
24 personally we own and have owned many buildings in  
25 downtown Mount Vernon. Professionally, we've sold

1 dozens of downtown buildings, including four within the  
2 last six months and at least tens of thousands of square  
3 feet.

4 Some may say our interest is professionally driven  
5 due to our representation of the Truck City Site. It  
6 goes way beyond this relationship. The issue is not why  
7 we want the jail to be located in south Mount Vernon at  
8 the Truck City Site, but rather why we do not want the  
9 jail located at the Alf Christiansen Site, the entrance  
10 to downtown Mount Vernon.

11 Some information. In 2008, the City of Mount  
12 Vernon adopted a master plan for downtown Mount Vernon  
13 and the waterfront. Along with dedicating \$27.3 million  
14 to the waterfront revitalization, this plan identified  
15 11 opportunity sites for new developments. The Alf  
16 Christiansen Site is identified as the largest  
17 opportunity site in downtown Mount Vernon.

18 According to the environmental impact statement,  
19 real estate appraisers and brokers, this site is some of  
20 the most valuable real estate in downtown, with  
21 potential for large development, hotel, office park,  
22 mixed use, retail and restaurant. This would generate a  
23 property tax and a sales tax to help support the City  
24 and County; hence, the jail, the schools,  
25 transportation, hospital, court district.

1           So what does this mean? According to the  
2 Environmental Impact Statement, the report that's just  
3 been completed, if the Alf Christiansen Site is allowed  
4 to be developed privately and not as a jail, it's  
5 estimated to generate \$587,000 in annual tax revenue and  
6 \$85 million in gross business receipts. If the Truck  
7 City Site jail is developed privately and not as a jail,  
8 it is estimated to generate \$145,000 in annual tax  
9 revenue and \$16 million in gross business receipts.

10           For this economic reason alone, the jail should be  
11 built on the Truck City Site in south Mount Vernon. A  
12 jail in south Mount Vernon will also generate traffic  
13 which will hence the development of other businesses in  
14 south Mount Vernon.

15           I have present with me today letters from the  
16 downtown Mount Vernon association and from the Chamber  
17 of Commerce, from the Commercial Brokerage Association  
18 which is commercial real estate brokers from Whatcom,  
19 Snohomish, and Skagit County that do business in our  
20 area. They are all in great concern of having the jail  
21 downtown as a welcome into the downtown community. A  
22 couple of quotes:

23           "Downtown Mount Vernon is formally recognized as a  
24 top tier Main Street Community, one of only 13 across  
25 our state. We are concerned the jail could become a

1     doorstep to our community," Mount Vernon Downtown  
2     Association.

3             "Aesthetically, what is there about a county jail  
4     that says 'Welcome to Mount Vernon?' We are investing  
5     millions in revitalizing our riverfront. Let's be smart  
6     about our front door as well," Jim Scott owner of  
7     Windermere Real Estate.

8             Ladies and gentleman, we have two choices for our  
9     sites. Why would you choose the Alf Christiansen Site  
10    when building a jail there and removing it from the tax  
11    rolls takes away a tremendous economic benefit to our  
12    community. Tax revenue of \$587,000, almost four times  
13    higher than the Truck City Site, would be generated  
14    under private development. Estimated gross business  
15    receipts of \$86 million. Over five times higher than  
16    Truck City site would be generated under private  
17    development.

18            If you choose the Alf Christiansen Site for the  
19    jail, you'll eliminate a much greater stream of revenue  
20    for the City, the County, the school district, the  
21    transportation district, hospital districts, and court  
22    district. This is our community. The City of Mount  
23    Vernon is committed to the revitalization of downtown  
24    and the waterfront. Investors and business owners are  
25    excited about downtown Mount Vernon. Make the correct

1 choice and add to this economic growth. Select the  
2 truck site for the jail, and leave the Alf Christiansen  
3 Site for private development.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. HANSON: Kristen Keltz. Sheila  
6 McCandlish.

7 MS. MCCANDLISH: I thought I was just signing  
8 in.

9 MS. HANSON: Ellen Camson

10 MS. CAMSON: What she said.

11 MS. HANSON: Donna Toeffler. Mary Ruth Holder.

12 MR. CHRISTENSEN: When the three minute time  
13 period is up, I'm just going to give you a little hand  
14 signal. So I'll just -- in respect to others who may  
15 want to comment, if you can keep your comments to three  
16 minutes, we'd greatly appreciate that. If there is time  
17 left over at the end, then we can allow more time.

18 MS. HOLDER: Okay. My name is Mary Ruth  
19 Holder. I live at 1319 Digby Place in Mount Vernon, and  
20 I'll be -- I'm submitting more detailed comments in  
21 writing, but I wanted to make at least a brief oral  
22 summary statement.

23 First of all, I really want to thank you for  
24 providing information to the public about this really  
25 important decision to pick a site for a much needed, new

1 jail and for allowing the public to provide public  
2 comments to you.

3 The EIS process and this hearing demonstrate a  
4 welcome to the public willingness to have an open and  
5 transparent decision making process. This is the way  
6 our Government should work and should continue to work  
7 in this case.

8 My husband, Philip and I retired to Skagit Valley  
9 nearly nine years ago. Of the places we could live here  
10 in the valley, we chose to live in Mount Vernon because  
11 of the beautiful and unique historic downtown. Mount  
12 Vernon's pedestrian friendly downtown is where we do the  
13 bulk of our shopping, including just today and other  
14 business, and we walk there nearly daily, and we conduct  
15 our errands there and meet friends there at restaurants  
16 and so forth.

17 We really value the City of Mount Vernon's  
18 considerable efforts to complete its Downtown and  
19 Waterfront Master Plan and the hard work and growing  
20 success by the City, our Downtown Association, and Mount  
21 Vernon Chamber of Commerce to insure that downtown Mount  
22 Vernon has a vibrant and growing downtown economy for  
23 the long term.

24 Siting a new jail, in this case, is not like what  
25 you think of or I think of as the usual development,

1 where there may be raw land available because the rural  
2 sites have already been eliminated. Instead, this  
3 presents an unusual case of dropping what is anticipated  
4 ultimately to be an 800-bed jail that would have the  
5 same footage as a Walmart super center into Mount  
6 Vernon's existing commercial enterprise area.

7 The Draft EIS demonstrates significant adverse  
8 impacts, as you just heard, that this would have  
9 particularly on the City's economy, tax revenues, and  
10 also land use, and indirect impacts on the  
11 transportation system, and even aesthetics if a large,  
12 new jail were to be located at the City's front door  
13 step; that is, at the Alf Christiansen Site. The  
14 impacts would be considerably less significant at the  
15 Truck City Site.

16 As you know, Mount Vernon's Downtown Comprehensive  
17 Plan and its Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan  
18 contemplate a different use of the Alf Christiansen  
19 Site; that is, a private commercial development to  
20 compliment and enhance our downtown's growth and  
21 prosperity.

22 I urge the County to respect the City of Mount  
23 Vernon's vision for the development of the Alf  
24 Christiansen Site, as articulated in the City's plans,  
25 and to allow the City to proceed with its plans,

1 particularly in light of the fact that there is a  
2 perfectly viable alternative, and that is Truck City.

3 Therefore, I recommend the Truck City alternative  
4 for the new jail site.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. HANSON: Mark Semrau. Steve Olson. Paul  
7 Taylor. Jim Carter.

8 MR. TAYLOR: My name is Paul Taylor. I live  
9 at 20388 Eric Street, Mount Vernon. I'm an attorney.  
10 I'm also a commercial real estate broker. I just  
11 recently opened up a new company.

12 I'm not representing anybody. I have no vested  
13 interest in either property. I live south of Mount  
14 Vernon, and I'm here to tell you my personal, opinion  
15 based on my background and experience, of why the Alf  
16 Christiansen Site is probably far superior than the  
17 south Mount Vernon Site.

18 First of all, I would like to point out that there  
19 is already a jail in downtown Mount Vernon. So what we  
20 are doing is moving a facility over to another portion.

21 Second thing is it's been pointed out that this is  
22 the gateway to Mount Vernon. So what's there right now?  
23 We have a rail station with inadequate parking. We have  
24 court houses and administrative buildings, and then we  
25 have a vacant industrial site.

1           Now, does that sound like it's really well planned  
2 and we've got something going for us? I don't think so.

3           As far as the site being used as a business park or  
4 a hotel, I'd like to find out what hotel would like to  
5 put a building right there and who would like to stay in  
6 it.

7           As far as business park, I have worked and rented  
8 from the Skagit I-5 Business Park which is south of  
9 town, and it's half vacant right now. If you build more  
10 business parks, they'll be vacant. So I don't think  
11 that's a viable use. The Alf Christiansen property has  
12 been up for sale for years, and it hasn't sold. That  
13 should tell you something.

14           Now, what about the site itself for what it's used  
15 for? Well, I've been going to the courthouse for the  
16 last 30 years, and I see inmates brought in on time.  
17 They walk right across the street from the current jail.  
18 Now, those same inmates are going to have to be brought  
19 up from downtown. They're going to take parking spaces,  
20 and they're gonna take time. Is that a good use? I  
21 don't think so. There is a better use for south Mount  
22 Vernon, a lot better uses.

23           I have a little experience in that. If some of you  
24 will note, the Cascade Mall in Burlington and the  
25 Factory Outlet mall in Burlington and that whole

1 commercial strip, well, I presented that plan to the  
2 City of Burlington in 1980 as part of my Master's  
3 Program from Arizona State University. That turned out  
4 pretty good for the City of Burlington. Now, some  
5 people may hate that. But in reality, it worked out.  
6 They have a really big tax base.

7 The same thing could be done for south Mount Vernon  
8 if you sit down and plan it well and not put up mixed  
9 uses down in south Mount Vernon. It has good freeway  
10 access. It could be a real gold mine for the City of  
11 Mount Vernon, if you plan it right. That's what we  
12 should be planning now, not to put the jail down there.  
13 Once you put a jail down there, do you think anybody  
14 else is gonna want to build anything on those vacant  
15 lots? I don't think so.

16 Anyway, I've put my comments in a written -- which  
17 I will submit, and I'm done, so thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Jim Carter.

19 MR. CARTER: My name is Jim Carter. I live at  
20 4223 Lupine Drive in Mount Vernon. I wasn't actually  
21 going to say anything here. I have prepared a  
22 presentation to send to Jana, but having heard some of  
23 the comments tonight, I decided that I better say what I  
24 think.

25 One of the things -- I'll point to Ruth and say,

1 Ruth, I'm in total agreement with you. I think that we  
2 should be developing the Truck City Site for the jail.

3 The economic impacts -- I have been watching very  
4 closely for the last four or five years the downtown  
5 revitalization effort, and it's coming beautifully Jana,  
6 thank you. I think that if we put the jail downtown, it  
7 will ruin most of the work that we have been after.  
8 Looking at the statistics and the economic impacts of  
9 it, I am totally in support of the jail going south.

10 So that's it. Thank you.

11 MS. HANSON: Glen Johnson.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I'm Glen Johnson. I live  
13 at 20482 Skagit City Road, Mount Vernon. I'm a  
14 proponent of the Christiansen Seed Site partly because I  
15 know the site intimately well having worked there  
16 throughout the 80s and time before that also. The loss  
17 of the short-term monies from the business development  
18 can be made up for in the recycling of that present  
19 facility.

20 Now, one of the major concerns that is brought up  
21 here is about geology and soils. Compressible soils  
22 create settlement hazardous. Well, there is a facility  
23 that has been built there and has been existing and has  
24 done its settling. It has its elevation above  
25 floodplain. The seed storage warehouse at the

1 Christiansen Seed Site, relatively new, extremely solid,  
2 extremely settled already, could house 200 inmates in a  
3 month or two if we decided to put use to something  
4 that's an existing facility rather than raising it and  
5 build something from new.

6 I figure that realistically recycling the  
7 Christiansen Seed Site could create a huge economic  
8 driver for the community by training inmates to no  
9 longer visit our jails, using the facility rather than  
10 just to incarcerate but to "tough love" them back into  
11 the workforce. Rather than using our own resources to  
12 incarcerate our own community members, we could be like  
13 Snohomish or Yakima hiring ourselves out to others for  
14 holding their inmates which would be an income provider  
15 to the County and the City as a potential use.

16 A mixed use is totally possible on not a 7.8 acre  
17 site that was listed here tonight but a  
18 nine-point-something acre site which is really what that  
19 place encompasses. Some of that is being tossed off for  
20 fear that it's more of a liability than an asset in this  
21 conversation. But the casting off of some of those  
22 parcels are parcels that are totally commercial  
23 properties that could be totally developed.

24 I want to specifically use inmate labor to do a  
25 manufacturing process, and thus having the County

1 receive the rewards for that manufacturing done by labor  
2 that -- I've been burgled. I didn't get my monies back  
3 from the burgle. The burglar got away with paying me  
4 \$12 worth of restitution. I'm a taxpayer that wants  
5 some restitution from our criminal element. And if that  
6 means us using their labor to manufacture something that  
7 the City and the County gets to reap a profit from, I'm  
8 all for it. Because as it is right now, we're not  
9 forcing the inmates to step up to their responsibility  
10 as a criminal. We have to remember that we're expending  
11 millions of dollars to incarcerate a criminal, not  
12 somebody who's an active participant in the economy.  
13 I'm wanting to turn them into an economic driver where  
14 they no longer come back to our jails ever again once  
15 they're in our jail once.

16 MS. HANSON: Rebecca Schlaht?

17 MS. SCHLAHT: No.

18 MS. HANSON: Barbara Busby.

19 MS. BUSBY: Pass.

20 MS. HANSON: Jack Cross.

21 MR. CROSS: I'll pass.

22 MS. HANSON: Tamara Thomas. Phyllis McKeehen.

23 MS. MCKEEHEN: My name is Phyllis McKeehen.

24 My address is 12576 Josh Wilson Road, Mount Vernon.

25 I'm looking at the alternative sites from two

1 perspectives. One is from a person who worked in the  
2 past, for 20 years, in the Skagit County Justice System  
3 and was a member of the original jail commission -- many  
4 meetings involved with that.

5 The other perspective is almost 50 years of coming  
6 to downtown Mount Vernon. My access is primarily, for  
7 the most part, heading south on I5, and then west on  
8 Kincaid Street.

9 We have in the jail two separate populations. We  
10 have those that are convicted of crimes that are serving  
11 time. We have those that are accused of crimes that  
12 still have to go to trial with a sentence, if one  
13 happens to be determined. The taxpayers cost to deal  
14 with those two separate populations in the jail is about  
15 -- is going to be about the same for those that are  
16 serving a sentence whether the jail is located in  
17 downtown Mount Vernon or whether the jail is located at  
18 the Truck City Site. As taxpayers, though, we cannot  
19 afford the increased cost that will be involved to the  
20 Criminal Justice System if the jail is in south Mount  
21 Vernon.

22 When you have a trial, you have to bring the person  
23 from the jail to the courthouse. There will be one  
24 courtroom in the new jail, but that is not going to be  
25 adequate for all of the trials.

1           Between Truck City and downtown Mount Vernon, there  
2           is a railroad track. When you're transporting a person  
3           from jail to town, you've got the cost of staff time and  
4           benefits for the deputy or deputies that's bringing the  
5           person to the courthouse. You've got the transportation  
6           costs, the vehicle update, the maintenance, the cost of  
7           gas. When you compound by the number of people,  
8           particularly where we're looking at a jail that's  
9           talking about 400 inmates, there is going to be a heck  
10          of a lot of cost to get people from jail to downtown.

11          While we don't know whether we're going to have a  
12          coal offloading facility in Whatcom County -- the  
13          concern about increased train traffic -- we do know  
14          currently underway in the City of Anacortes is the  
15          expansion of the facilities at both refineries for the  
16          increased crude oil train traffic that's going to occur.

17          There is going to be a lot of times, if we're  
18          bringing people from the jail to downtown Mount Vernon  
19          from the Truck City Site, that we're going to have an  
20          increased cost because somebody is waiting for the train  
21          to get out of the way so that they can go forward.  
22          That's adding for the cost of transport and has to be  
23          factored into economics.

24          From the aesthetic standpoint, I think credit has  
25          to go where credit is due. The County has been very

1 good at having aesthetically pleasing buildings. They  
2 have maintained the grounds. Frankly, they're doing a  
3 better job than about 95 percent of the existing  
4 businesses that are located in downtown Mount Vernon. I  
5 think an aesthetic addition to the community is going to  
6 occur. Our architects, give them credit. They're good.  
7 I think it will look much better and be much more  
8 economically benefited to the community if it's in  
9 downtown Mount Vernon.

10 MS. HANSON: Margaret Fleek.

11 MS. FLEEK: Margaret Fleek, Burlington  
12 Planning Department. We did submit written comments on  
13 the Draft EIS. It was a very thorough job. I think  
14 they did a really hard look at everything and the  
15 details, but this is our regional historic downtown. It  
16 has a huge future, and we need to preserve it for  
17 downtown. We need to have that jail down at the Alf  
18 Christiansen Seed Site. They'll have -- they've got  
19 video. They've got courtrooms. They've got no problem  
20 with access for the prisoners, but we need to have our  
21 history maintained and preserved and expanded on. This  
22 is one of the center pieces of our region.

23 I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you  
24 very much, and good job.

25 MS. HANSON: Tom Sicklesteel.

1           MR. SICKLESTEEL: My name is Tom Sicklesteel.  
2 My address is 10121 Sicklesteel Lane. We have about 20  
3 acres along Cedardale. We're in business down there, a  
4 little crane company.

5           What I wanted to talk about was the economic  
6 impact. While I think talking about alternatives in a  
7 possibility scenario -- there's some real economic  
8 impacts that are here and now and costs that could be  
9 impacting based on this decision that we could actually  
10 measure and we can actually deal with in the here and  
11 now instead of the potential and the possibility and the  
12 probabilities which may or may not ever occur.

13           For instance, in the corridor -- and all I'm going  
14 to address in this is Truck City's Site because that's  
15 all I really know. That I5 corridor is an industrial  
16 corridor. The industrial corridor is filled with  
17 trucking companies, and it's filled with also a  
18 Department of Transportation oversized vehicle station  
19 where you can get permits.

20           When the Skagit bridge was wiped out and oversized  
21 loads had to be stopped and curfewed, they parked in  
22 south Mount Vernon. They parked all along the I5 -- the  
23 Truck City place and along the roads there, and that  
24 sort of stuff. The reason they are doing that is the  
25 routes on and off the freeway and the routes to a fuel

1 station is the only one in the County outside of Cook  
2 Road. The next one is south, down at Donna's truck stop  
3 in Marysville.

4 So what does that mean for my company? My cranes  
5 cannot fuel at the fuel station that's like 300 feet up  
6 the road from me. I have to go to Truck City in order  
7 to turn the cranes around and cycle through there. If  
8 that's closed, my cranes now have to go up to Cook Road  
9 or down to Donna's. If we do that, we pay about \$10 per  
10 mile for the pleasure of going down the freeway. That  
11 can easily wind up \$500 per trip just to fuel the crane.  
12 That would be a huge economic impact for us.

13 There is a number of trucking companies and heavy  
14 haul companies that use that area for those purposes.  
15 That's what it was intended for. That's why the City of  
16 Mount Vernon sought it so hard when they incorporated it  
17 a while back. I understand about economics and economic  
18 impact, but I think comparing probabilities and  
19 possibilities versus the here and now is not  
20 appropriate.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. HANSON: Patty Smith.

23 MS. SMITH: My name is Patty Smith. I live at  
24 6184 West Edison Lane in Bow, Washington.

25 I'm one of the owners of Truck City, and I would

1 just like to say that if the jail is not built down  
2 there, it probably will not be a truck stop. I just  
3 wanted that known. If you take out of fact that I own  
4 one of the sites, I look at it purely from common sense.  
5 It makes more common sense to build it down at Truck  
6 City than it does at Alf Christiansen. You're getting  
7 way more land. You're not putting yourself in a small  
8 space where you're going to need to get more land later  
9 on down the road. You keep your downtown core intact.  
10 Those people all really don't want it down there. It's  
11 your whole downtown. If you don't have a downtown with  
12 all your independent business, you don't have an old  
13 town downtown. Sorry. I don't speak well in front of  
14 people.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. HANSON: Jerry Dodd.

17 MR. DODD: Just was signing in.

18 MS. HANSON: Charlie Wend.

19 MR. WEND: Just signing in.

20 MS. HANSON: Brian Clark.

21 MR. CLARK: I'd like to come at the end.

22 MS. HANSON: Craig Cammock.

23 MR. CAMMOCK: Craig Cammock, 227 Freeway  
24 Drive. To be right up front, I'm an attorney. My firm  
25 has represented Alf Christiansen since the last 70s.

1 I'm also a downtown business owner/downtown property  
2 owner, downtown shopper, big time downtown eater. My  
3 thoughts are the same regardless of the fact that Alf  
4 Christiansen is a client.

5 The worst thing that ever happen to downtown Mount  
6 Vernon was the County pulling out the administrative  
7 offices, moving them here on Continental Place. If you  
8 look around the room, there's a lot of people in this  
9 room that will spill out on the streets when this  
10 meeting is done. Wouldn't it be great if they were  
11 dumping out into downtown Mount Vernon right at dinner  
12 time? Well, they're not because the County is here now.

13 The jail, as currently configured, has 75 full-time  
14 employees and will expand to 136 employees at full  
15 capacity. That's 136 employees to the employee base of  
16 Mount Vernon that will disappear to south Mount Vernon.  
17 At shifts end, they'll get in their car. It will be  
18 just as easy to go to Burlington or home as it will be  
19 to downtown Mount Vernon. Downtown Mount Vernon needs  
20 the employee base that's represented by the jail and the  
21 facilities, auxiliary services, staff and personnel that  
22 goes with it.

23 There is other problems or rather advantages to the  
24 Alf Christiansen Site. Beginning with the floodwall,  
25 Mount Vernon, the taxpayers are investing \$30 million in

1 a floodwall to protect critical facilities, critical  
2 downtown and future developments. It makes no sense to  
3 build a \$60 million jail on top of floodplain and not  
4 protect it by our \$30 million investment in the  
5 floodwall.

6 The jail is also a critical facility. This means  
7 that it needs access 24/7, 365 days a year. The EIS  
8 glossed over the fact that in the floodplain we'll lose  
9 access to the jail. Simply, the EIS states, well, with  
10 the advanced flood warning, the jail can stock up on  
11 supplies and ride out the high water until it goes down.  
12 I've seen Lord of the Flies. I know what happens when  
13 you cut out the jail. There's riots. There's medical  
14 needs. You need access to and from the jail. It's  
15 wishful thinking to say, they'll ride it out with a pile  
16 of food in the back room.

17 Safety is also an issue. The EIS knows notes that  
18 the south Mount Vernon property is at high risk of --  
19 and earthquake. Alf Christiansen is medium risk. One  
20 thing we know we are going to have in this area are  
21 earthquakes and floods. The Alf Christiansen Site is  
22 better in both regards.

23 As for appearance, the property is currently a  
24 rundown warehouse. The best thing that could happen in  
25 City of Mount Vernon, to the extent you can even see the

1 Alf Christiansen Property when you enter Mount Vernon,  
2 is to have it redeveloped into an attractive new  
3 facility, such as the jail we already have that does not  
4 drive away business in the City of Mount Vernon.

5 As for redevelopment, you have to understand the  
6 difficulties of developing the Alf Christiansen Site.  
7 It's sandwiched between the railroad and the freeway.  
8 You can stack traffic for the turn signal. The only  
9 access is right, right out only. That means no hotel,  
10 no restaurant, no business wants to access off of that  
11 because there is no practical access from the freeway.

12 Can you imagine going into your hotel and they ask  
13 you, do you want the railroad view room or the freeway  
14 view room. It's too noisy. It's too crowded, and the  
15 access is too bad for viable redevelopment.

16 Over the course of our representation of Alf  
17 Christiansen, I've become familiar with the number of  
18 people that have been interested in the property, which  
19 is few and far between. The interest has been this:  
20 pickle storage from a now bankrupt company, a climbing  
21 wall, an espresso stand, and used as a warehouse. None  
22 of them materialized. That's the extent of interest  
23 that has occurred for that property. None of it is  
24 real. None of it is viable.

25 The relocation of the jail to the Alf Christiansen

1 Site would be a benefit to the City of Mount Vernon, as  
2 recognized by Alf Christiansen which substantially  
3 discounted the appraised value of the property to move  
4 it because they know there is no other viable  
5 alternative.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. HANSON: Kathleen Bisagna.

8 MS. BISAGNA: No.

9 MS. HANSON: Brian Clark.

10 MR. CLARK: My name is Brian Clark. I office  
11 at 227 Freeway Drive, Mount Vernon, Washington. I lived  
12 in the immediate Mount Vernon area for nearly 30 years  
13 with my family before relocating some 20 miles north. I  
14 reside 866 Autumn Lane. I'm a partner of Craig Cammock.  
15 Like Craig, we've represented the Seed Company since  
16 1979. At least, I have. Prior to that, my firm  
17 represented them probably for 40 years.

18 I'm an owner of commercial property in downtown  
19 Mount Vernon. My family has owned property in downtown  
20 Mount Vernon for 60 years or more. I have looked at  
21 some of the economic projections contained in the EIS.  
22 I think they are extremely over optimistic, as far as  
23 redevelopment of the existing Alf Christiansen Seed  
24 site. I think my partner, Craig Cammock went into the  
25 discussion in detail relative to the limitations of that

1 site in terms of access and the fact that it's  
2 sandwiched between I5 and the railroad track.

3 I have a concern about the relocation of services  
4 in downtown Mount Vernon, the movement of administrative  
5 offices from the present County core, that this is just  
6 part of that trend with the movement of the Criminal  
7 Justice Center from the existing site to the extreme  
8 south Mount Vernon. We have the administrative offices  
9 and other County divisions here, out here on Continental  
10 Place, the two extreme sites. That doesn't do anything  
11 for the downtown Mount Vernon core in terms of potential  
12 patrons for businesses and services and the like.

13 I, professionally and personally, feel that the  
14 best site for the jail, in terms of immediate spin off,  
15 is the Alf Christiansen Seed Company Site. Truck City,  
16 I think, imposes some additional costs, as we've heard  
17 from several of the speakers already, in terms of  
18 transportation. It makes no sense to me for the City of  
19 Mount Vernon to spend \$30 million on a floodwall to  
20 encapsulate the downtown Mount Vernon area and not  
21 provide that protection to a new Criminal Justice Center  
22 or jail.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. HANSON: And Brian, my apologies. There  
25 are a few more names.

1           John Mitzel.

2                   MR. MITZEL: My name is a John Mitzel. I live  
3 at 2703 River Vista Loop in Mount Vernon. I am a  
4 commercial real estate broker with Windermere out of  
5 Whatcom County, live in Mount Vernon.

6           In all disclosure, I represent two of the owners of  
7 property that is called the Truck City Site. I have got  
8 some questions that are a little more specific. I  
9 support what Balisa has said 100 percent, and I have  
10 some other clarifications I'd like to share.

11           1. The questions I've got have to do with the  
12 cost of development of the two sites. Which site, based  
13 on the information available, including in the EIS, are  
14 the most cost affective? Does that include the  
15 anticipated off-site costs? Does it include the cost of  
16 property owned by the City of Mount Vernon? Which site  
17 has the most unknowns which could add developments cost?

18           2. Which site based on information available  
19 included in the EIS would have the fastest development  
20 schedule including completion of off-site work,  
21 beginning with the development of site engineering  
22 drawings? Which site gives a design team the most  
23 flexibility to include any desired changes that may come  
24 up during the design phase of the project?

25           Another question, which site would or could have

1 the most potential direct costs from the development of  
2 the site to the City of Mount Vernon?

3 The previous speakers have talked about the  
4 transportation costs and the time. I want to clarify  
5 that. It's my belief that the time for handling inmates  
6 to court, back and forth from downtown Mount Vernon and  
7 to the Truck City Site is minimum. I drive it. I  
8 represent a lot of property in Mount Vernon. I know  
9 what it takes to get there, and the tracks have to be  
10 crossed no matter what. The inmates will be transported  
11 by vehicle. They it will not be walked across the  
12 street. That doesn't happen today. Train traffic I do  
13 believe is an issue overall that we have to address in  
14 the City because it may have some real honest affect of  
15 our commercial needs.

16 The floodwall certification will not take place for  
17 several years, and the -- the Alf Christiansen Site  
18 cannot be certified until that is completed, and that is  
19 more years out than when the jail will be --  
20 construction will start.

21 Hotels on the site. I represent three different  
22 groups of hotel owners, and they are leasing their  
23 properties. I've sold hotels for them and have look for  
24 their sites.

25 One of the previous comments was about the tracks.

1 Well, folks, the tracks are a factor of the Hampton Inn,  
2 Candlewood Suites, and the Fairfield Inn in Burlington,  
3 and they are all thriving. I5 is a factor in just about  
4 every hotel on interchanges in Mount Vernon. And there  
5 is planned hotels in Marysville.

6 I'm going to end with a quote from a Jim Clausen, a  
7 commercial real estate broker in Snohomish County that  
8 meets with us on a regular basis focusing on bringing  
9 business to Skagit County. I may be a word or two off  
10 here, but this what he said recently:

11 "It would be not be prudent or responsible for the  
12 City of Mount Vernon Leaders to take the risk of  
13 allowing the new County Jail to be built at the entrance  
14 to the City that would impact the desired results of the  
15 existing \$27 million investment in revitalizing downtown  
16 Mount Vernon."

17 Thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Carl Crawford. Roger Pederson.

19 MR. CRAWFORD: Carl Crawford, 200 Bellmount  
20 Terrace, Mount Vernon, a registered voter and a legal  
21 citizen of the United States.

22 I am opposed to the Alf Christiansen Site. That's  
23 the entrance to the City. We need to do everything we  
24 can to make the City look beautiful. A hotel there  
25 makes a lot of sense, just like the gentleman just said.

1 There are lots of areas similar to that, that have  
2 commercial and hotel facilities, just like that site  
3 would have, so that's a non-issue.

4 Transportation to and from the jail is a non-issue.  
5 How many blocks is it from the courthouse down to the  
6 Truck City Site? It's very few. If you think of other  
7 cities, many cities have to travel many miles from their  
8 jail to courthouse, so that's a non-issue. I'm in favor  
9 of the Truck City Site, and I hope that's the decision  
10 that everyone will make eventually.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. HANSON: Roger Pedersen.

13 MR. PEDERSEN: Roger Pedersen, Mount Vernon.  
14 Born and raised in Mount Vernon. Raised from the -- I  
15 was raised down in the Cedardale area. I find it  
16 interesting you call this the Truck City Site on Suzanne  
17 Lane. I'd call it the Cedardale Site, but that's a  
18 matter of history, I guess.

19 I'd like to make my comments historically and then  
20 perspective. In 1940, when I was in school in this  
21 town, Mount Vernon was a viable, all purpose downtown.  
22 It had medical facilities. It had shops. It had  
23 stores. It had processing, industrial things. We had  
24 two condensers. We had two processing plants.  
25 Actually, three if you moved down to San Juan. It was a

1 viable, busy business center of our community. And our  
2 county.

3 As you know, Mount Vernon is located between the  
4 bend of a river and a hill which forces railroad. In  
5 those days, Highway 99 and a route to Anacortes which  
6 crossed -- was a convenient crossing of the river at  
7 Skagit -- Skagit River. My grandfather was killed on  
8 that river in 1906. But after 1945, the war was over,  
9 things begin to change.

10 I also might say in 1945 we had Model A's and Model  
11 T's and smaller cars than we have today. You could walk  
12 from downtown to the hill easily. You had no interstate  
13 system blocking the two routes between the two. As a  
14 consequence, when I5 was built, you divided the  
15 residential area and the downtown area. The walking to  
16 and from the residential areas on the hill to downtown  
17 ceased; and cars became more numerous and bigger; trucks  
18 became larger; and people got off the railroad trains  
19 and started using trucks and vehicles. Mount Vernon did  
20 not adjust to the increasing size of the vehicles, nor  
21 did it adapt to the increasing numbers.

22 With increased mobility after World War II, Mount  
23 Vernon made some pretty -- did make various decisions.  
24 And after World War II, people started to move out of  
25 the Mount Vernon downtown area, one by one. And I'm

1 going to cite specifically what used to be the Mount  
2 Vernon Herald was located at Second and Broadway for  
3 those of you that can remember that time frame. Then  
4 they moved to Second and Washington, at the bottom of  
5 the viaduct. Then they moved to College Way. And now  
6 they've moved to Anderson Road in the Cedardale area.

7 Our Montgomery Ward store, Sears and Roebuck,  
8 medical offices, all these things have left downtown one  
9 by one because of the mobility of the vehicles and the  
10 larger trucks. Mount Vernon has not done a good job in  
11 accommodating those things, so now we need to do  
12 something and the decision that is going to be made is  
13 going to affect all of this. I'm not giving a  
14 recommendation for one side or the other, but it's going  
15 to be a historical deciding decision as to what happened  
16 to downtown, and it needs to be very well considered.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. HANSON: Is there anybody that I didn't  
19 call that you'd like to speak? Thank you very much.  
20 We're here to answer questions, if there are any. We'll  
21 be here until about six o'clock.

22 Thank you.

23 (Whereupon the hearing concluded at 5:08 p.m.)

24

25

STATE OF WASHINGTON. )  
 ) SS: C E R T I F I C A T E  
COUNTY OF WHATCOM )

I, Deanna Ellis, a Certified Court Reporter  
in and for the State of Washington do hereby certify;

That the foregoing is true and correct to  
the best of my skill, ability, and knowledge, taken  
on the date and at the time and place as shown on  
Page Two hereto;

That I am not related to any of the parties  
to this litigation and have no interest in the  
outcome of said litigation;

Witness my hand and seal this 27<sup>th</sup> day of  
January, 2014.

Deanna M. Ellis

DEANNA M. ELLIS, CCR #2511

IN AND FOR THE STATE OF  
WASHINGTON, RESIDING AT  
MARYSVILLE, WASHINGTON